

**AUGUSTA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION STUDY
JOINT MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE AND CITIZENS
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ROOM 802, MUNICIPAL BUILDING, AUGUSTA, GEORGIA
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2004, 9:30 A.M.**

Augusta-Richmond Co. Planning Commission

George Patty
Paul DeCamp
Lynn Russell
Sangeetha Rao

City of Aiken

Roger LeDuc

SC DOT

Macheal Peterson
Brian Fulmer
Michael Dennis

CAC

Terry Smith
Marianne Pecoraro
Les Morton
Willie Bell

City of Augusta

Teresa Smith
Heyward Johnson

GA DOT

Radney Simpson
Scott Stephens
Christa McKinney
George Brewer

Columbia County

Tim Young
Ronnie Hutto

Media

Dena Levitz, Augusta Chronicle

Other

Daniel Garcia, Reeves Construction

Mr. Terry Smith chaired the CAC meeting in the absence of Mr. Schumacher. Mr. Patty chaired the TCC meeting.

1. Consider approval of the minutes from the joint TCC and CAC meeting held on August 11, 2004.

CAC – Mrs. Pecoraro moved to approve the minutes as sent out. Mr. Bell seconded. Unanimous approval.

TCC – Mr. Patty moved to approve the minutes as sent out. Mr. Simpson seconded. Unanimous approval.

2. Issues and Concerns

a) Prior

Mr. Morton stated that the minutes did not reflect his concerns about the projects not being completed on time and on budget.

Ms. Rao commented that she had contacted Daniel Garcia with Reeves Construction who asked to be on the agenda to answer questions Mr. Morton or other CAC members may have.

Scott Stephens with GA DOT reported that the Deans Bridge Road project had been extended until December. The original completion date was July, 2004. The contract is in the process of being extended to reflect the December completion date. Mr. Stephens explained to Mr. Morton that the project was not completed by July because the scope of the project had changed.

In response to Mr. Morton's question, Mr. Garcia responded that Reeves Construction was working with GDOT to speed up construction on the Fury's Ferry project. They have received a few extensions on the project due to minor changes. A major cause of delay at the inception was utility relocation, which is the responsibility of utility companies, not GDOT or contractors. A written notice has been sent to GDOT on the delay in moving utility poles and lines. Liquidated damages are in force on both projects (Deans Bridge Road and Fury's Ferry Road). The committees discussed contract negotiations, utility company responsibilities and repercussions for delaying projects.

Mr. Smith said that at the last meeting, there was concern about the impact of the Downtown Augusta Streetscape Master Plan on the aesthetics of downtown. After reviewing the planning documents, Mr. Smith is satisfied that aesthetics are being factored into the project. Augusta Public Works contracted with URS, Inc. to complete the study. The plan has yet to be approved by the Augusta Commission. It is a streetscape plan which also looks at parking, sidewalk treatments, landscaping, street lighting, street furnishings and related issues. One of the concerns expressed was that the plan was very generic and displayed no attributes that tie it to Augusta. It could be applied in any community.

Mrs. Pecoraro asked about her prior request to create a right-turn only lane for stores along Whiskey Road. Mr. Dennis of SC DOT explained the road frontage would have to be condemned to create the right turn lane. This condemnation might result in legal action by affected property owners based on the argument that property values are lower because access to some properties is more restricted than it was prior to the condemnation. Mr. Dennis said the project could be done, but would likely result in one or more lawsuits. Mr. Patty noted the difference in Georgia and South Carolina State laws concerning limiting ingress / egress to businesses on a major road.

Ms. Peterson explained SC DOT could look at and change access points during the widening of a road if there are clusters of driveways. The Access Manual limits the number of access points for X-number of feet along a road. Without road improvements, public involvement, or some form of agreement with the affected property owners, you would not be able to close existing driveways. Access means business, the more access points the better business will be. There are currently no funds for the improvements to Whiskey Road suggested by Mrs. Pecoraro.

Ms. Pecoraro asked about the process for a new store to build a driveway. The owners would have to apply for an encroachment permit. In the encroachment process, SC DOT looks at access and water drainage issues. In addition, the affected municipality has regulations that must be followed. Mr. LeDuc stated that the City of Aiken is currently developing a new Driveway Access Plan that could prevent road access problems in the future.

Mr. Morton inquired about work on the Bobby Jones Expressway at SR Hwy 56. Mr. Garcia's company – Reeves Construction – has the contract for this project. The original completion date was June 2004. The contract was extended to July 2005 due to weather-related delays and a change in the scope of work. There are currently liquidated damages of approximately \$54,000.

b) Current / New

Mrs. Pecoraro stated she was receiving complaints on the change of traffic signal on Williamsburg Road. There have been nine accidents since the change and none prior. Is this a problem is the public having problems adjusting to the change? Ms. Rao will contact Aiken officials for a report for the next meeting.

3. Status of Project Reports

a) Georgia Highways

Ms. McKinney presented this item. The bridge replacement at the Crawford Creek (000809) project will be let this month (September). Right-of-way acquisition on the widening of Davis Road from Skinner Mill Road to Washington Road (250560) is 50% complete. The survey is 100% and right of way plans are 50% complete on the I-20 drainage improvement project (0001795).

b) South Carolina Highways

Ms. Peterson presented this item. The projects are all on schedule. **The** Georgia Avenue Extension project is in the design phase. Work is moving forward on the acquisition of right-of-way on the Palmetto Parkway Phase II, but still looking for money to fund the construction.

c) Augusta Public Transit

Mr. Johnson presented this item. There have been no major changes since the last presentation. Mr. Johnson said that he made a presentation to the Augusta Commission requesting \$5.5 million in the next phase of SPLOST to construct a new transfer facility in South Augusta, rehabilitate the existing administration facilities and to purchase new transit vehicles. The Augusta Commission approved \$5.0 million of the request to be added to the SPLOST referendum list to be voted on in November.

d) Aiken County Transit

There was no one available from Aiken County to present this item.

4. Presentation on the Columbia County Transportation Study (see attached handout).

Mr. Young presented this item. Georgia DOT and Columbia County contracted with TEI Engineers and Planners, now part of HNTB, to complete a county-wide transportation study. The study began in early 2003 and was completed in June of this year. The handout distributed by Mr. Young lists \$442.0 million in transportation projects recommended by the study. The cost estimate does not include right-of-way acquisition costs. The projects will not solve all the mobility problems, but most of the daily traffic problems. Peak period traffic congestion will remain. The projects are classified as near, mid and long-term improvements. The study projects Columbia County's population to be 136,000 in 2025 and 156-165,000 in 2030. Most of the projects are already in the ARTS Long Range Plan or will be added during the ongoing update. The Columbia County Board of Commissioners approved the study on August 17, 2004. The transportation study will now be incorporated into the update of the Columbia County Comprehensive Plan. The study is available on the Columbia County Web site.

5. Consider request from the City of Aiken and the SC Policy Subcommittee to approve amendments to the FY 05 – FY 07 Transportation Improvement Program:

- a) **Delete Hitchcock Parkway (Passing Lanes) and Whiskey Road/ Silver Bluff Road Connector.**
- b) **Add the widening of Silver Bluff Road from Indian Creek Trail to Richardson's Lake Road (\$4,222,000). The \$500,000.00 from Hitchcock Parkway and \$3,720,000.00 from the Whiskey Road/Silver Bluff Connector will be used for this project.**

Mr. LeDuc presented this item. The Hitchcock Parkway is a bypass circling the southwest section of Aiken. It was built in the 1970s as a two-lane limited access roadway. Because it is a limited access roadway, very little development has occurred in this area in the last fifteen years. In contrast, Silver Bluff Road, which connects Aiken to the Savannah River Site, has experienced extensive development since the mid-1980s. Commercial and residential development generates higher traffic volumes on Silver Bluff Road. One example is Woodside Plantation, a planned community which currently has 2,000 homes, another 800 being built, and another 1,000 units planned within the next ten years.

The City Council of Aiken approved shifting the funding from Hitchcock Parkway and the Silver Bluff Road-Whiskey Road Connector projects to the Silver Bluff Road widening project for a couple of reasons. First, traffic volumes on Hitchcock Parkway have not increased greatly over the last ten years, while volumes on Silver Bluff Road have increased. Second, the Silver Bluff Road-Whiskey Road Connector project is not expected to be constructed for several years. The South Carolina Policy Subcommittee subsequently approved the proposed amendment to the TIP.

According to Mr. LeDuc, a portion of Silver Bluff Road was widened to five lanes about ten years ago, but the proposed project would extend the widening to an area that is experiencing rapid growth. For example an office / medical complex is planned for construction adjacent to Phase 3 of Woodside Plantation. This development is expected to add 5,000 + vehicle trips per day in this area, and the 1,000 additional homes to be built in Woodside will add 15,000 trips per day on Silver Bluff Road.

Mrs. Pecoraro complained that the last time she was on Hitchcock Parkway the traffic was bumper-to-bumper and her vehicle speed never went above 25 mph. This road has a speed limit of 55 mph and serves not only as a bypass around Aiken, but also connects to U.S. 1 which is a direct route from Aiken to Augusta. The school traffic also contributes to congestion on Hitchcock Parkway. While Aiken City Council has not received complaints on this road, Mrs. Pecoraro has received a number of complaints in her capacity as a CAC member.

CAC – Mr. Morton moved to postpone action on this amendment to the FY 2005 TIP until further information is received. This motion failed for lack of a second.

Mr. Bell made a substitute motion to approve the amendments. This motion failed for lack of a second.

The CAC is an advisory committee. The decisions or lack of decisions will be forwarded to the Policy Committee as information.

TCC – Mr. LeDuc moved to approve this amendment to the FY 2005 TIP. Mr. Young seconded. Unanimous approval.

6. Early Action Compact – An Air Quality Initiative

a) Aiken County

No one was available to present this item.

b) Richmond County

Mr. DeCamp presented this item. EPD held a public information meeting on August 24, 2004 regarding the Stage 1 Recovery Program and its possible implementation in Richmond County. Another public information meeting on this and the possible open burning ban will be held in the fall. Copies of the presentation made at the public meeting are available.

7. Update on Special Studies Projects

a) ARTS Long Range Transportation Plan

Mr. DeCamp presented this item. The Long Range Plan is progressing along. ARTS staff completed the 2002 base year socioeconomic data for all TAZs. This information was sent to both GDOT modelers and the consultant. GDOT modelers are using the base year data to recalibrate the ARTS travel demand model. The consultants at URS are working on the year 2030 socioeconomic projections.

George A. Patty
Project Director